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# Former Agent Says CIA Deceives, Manipulates Public

By TOM SAUL  
Staff Writer

Ralph McGehee, a 25-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency, says that while he served as a paramilitary specialist, liaison to foreign police and spy agencies and intelligence analyst, he was an avid "cold warrior."

"As I understood it, the purpose of the CIA was to gather foreign intelligence so the executive branch (of the federal government) could make more informed decisions on foreign policy," said McGehee in Ocala this week for a press conference sponsored by the Marion County Center for Peace and Justice as part of national Central America Information Week.

As his career progressed, McGehee said, he became more disenchanted with the agency as he learned that its main purpose was to manipulate public opinion in the U.S. through a pattern of fabricated events and forged documents and photos to cover its real aims.

"I came to the conclusion that the real purpose of the CIA has not now nor has it ever been intelligence-gathering activities," he said.

The agency's real purpose is to conduct covert activities aimed at overthrowing governments in line with the president's foreign policy goals, McGehee said.

"One of its main tools is to disseminate misinformation, most of which is aimed at the American public to deceive them and to justify their (the CIA's) activities," McGehee said.

His experiences during the Vietnam War convinced him that the CIA's hidden agenda was dangerous and potentially disastrous for U.S. foreign policy, McGehee said. In addition, he said he sees the same patterns being repeated in Central America, particularly Nicaragua.

In a book called "Deadly Deceits" McGehee outlines his experiences as a spook, a book that took three years to publish after the CIA raised more than 370 objections to portions of its content. Members of the U.S. intelligence community

are required to sign an agreement with the government under which they must submit writings to their respective spy agencies for prior censorship.

"Before they conduct a covert action they have to convince the American people it is legitimate," McGehee said.

That was the case in Vietnam, where information falsified by the CIA and fed to the American public set the stage for some of the major events of the war, McGehee said. It is also going on in the Caribbean and Central America to justify such things as 1983's invasion by U.S. troops of the tiny island of Grenada and covert support for the contra guerrillas in Nicaragua.

In Grenada, for example, the U.S. pretext for the invasion was overthrow by radical Marxists of the government there and accusation that the island would become a base for Cuban-sponsored revolution. To justify that, pictures of supposed warehouses full of communist-supplied weapons were produced by the CIA. The only thing was that the pictures were fakes, McGehee said.

In Central America, the CIA has accused the Nicaraguan government of supplying weapons to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador as a reason for supporting the contras, McGehee said. Those weapons have, for the most part, have been plants by the spy agency, he said.

"Their main objective is really the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government by any means necessary," McGehee said.

The accusations of deceit by the CIA are nothing new, McGehee said. Throughout its history since the end of World War II, it has followed the same pattern of activity, a pattern that was laid bare during Congressional hearings in the mid-1970s on the activities of the U.S. intelligence community.

"I'm not asking people to believe me, all they have to do is check the record," McGehee said.

The fact that he, a former agent who was much decorated for his

work, should turn into a critic only buttresses the argument that all is not right in the U.S.'s largest and most secret spy agency, he said.

Over the years, the result has been that much of the developing world has grown to resent the U.S. and view its interests with suspicion, McGehee said. One outgrowth of that is the marked increase in terrorism against American citizens and institutions abroad.

"The CIA has traditionally thrown its support behind a military elite rather than popular mass political movements in developing countries. That puts the Soviets in the position of supporting the masses and putting us on the side of some of the world's worst dictators," said McGehee pointing to U.S. support for Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines and Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier of Haiti.

"I'm a critic now because I worked for 25 years in the belly of the beast and what I saw made me believe that the activities of the CIA are leading us to disaster."

FILE ONLY

FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS (FL)  
12 April 1986

# Ex-CIA agent compares Nicaragua to Vietnam era

By ERNESTINE WILLIAMS  
News-Press Staff Writer

When former CIA agent Ralph McGehee reviews U.S. involvement in Central America, he says he sees a replay of the activities that preceded the Vietnam War.

"There are many similarities," he said Friday in Fort Myers. "The gradual introduction of advisers into the area. The advisers will get killed and then you have to justify it; you can't let them die in vain. More troops go in and ultimately, the whole area becomes a military war."

McGehee, 58, spoke at the Airport Ramada Hotel during a luncheon of the Lee County Coalition for Peace. The gathering is part of a series of activities during Central American Information Week in Florida, April 6-13.

The proposed \$100 million package of U.S. aid for the contras includes sending military advisers to train the contras, McGehee said.

"It's just sort of a creepy escalation that ended up in the (Vietnam) war that cost us ultimately approximately \$500 billion and the deaths of 58,000 Americans," he said.

The threat of communism "has been the traditional excuse" for aid to foreign countries that the United States wants to control, he said.

"Sometimes it's a red herring; sometimes there's reality behind it," he said. "But I think that via our policies we've forced the Sandinistas to go to the Soviet Union for their weaponry. And now we can say they are in alignment with the Soviets."

If the United States had developed commercial and diplomatic relations with the Sandinistas, they wouldn't have gone to the Soviets, he said. U.S. officials don't want to assist Central American governments in becoming independent, he said.

"We have traditionally created the governments down there and controlled them," he said. "We created the Somoza government and it was very responsive to all the policies that we wanted to implement."

It's a matter of economics, McGehee said. U.S.-based corporations can take their business to repressive governments that don't allow social equity programs, such as labor unions. There they produce goods at a fraction of the cost they would incur in the United States, he said.

McGehee, who spent 25 years in the CIA until 1977, wrote "Deadly Deceits," which details CIA activities in Central America. A second book about the CIA is in the works, he said.

"A major part of (the CIA's) covert action role is misinformation, and the American people are the primary target of its lies," he said.

The contra program was established because the Nicaraguan government was supplying weapons to Salvadoran leftists, he said. But much of the information on the weapons supply is contrived through deceptive operations, such as fake shipments of weapons, he said.

"Whenever you want to overturn or support another government, you're going to have a communist weapon shipment. If you can't find one you plant one and make arrangements for its discovery and then use that as an excuse for your policy," he said. "That's sort of an inviolable rule and I've seen this happen over and over again in Central America."

**FILE ONLY**

COCOA TODAY (FL)  
14 April 1986

## **Ex-CIA agent sees Vietnam parallel in Central America**

**By Ernestine Williams  
FLORIDA TODAY**

**FORT MYERS** —When former CIA agent Ralph McGehee reviews U.S. involvement in Central America, he says he sees a replay of the activities that preceded the Vietnam War.

"There are many similarities," he said while speaking recently in Fort Myers. "The gradual introduction of advisers into the area. The advisers will get killed and then you have to justify it; you can't let them die in vain. More troops go in and ultimately, the whole area becomes a military war."

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FILE ONLY

GAINESVILLE SUN (FL)  
10 April 1986

# Former agent says CIA No. 1 instigator of terrorism in world

By LARRY SCHNELL  
Sun staff writer

The Central Intelligence Agency is the "No. 1 terrorist organization in the world," said an ex-agent who warned Wednesday that congressional approval of \$100 million aid for U.S.-backed Contras could be the first step to U.S. military intervention in Central America.

Ralph McGehee, a 25-year CIA veteran who took part in covert operations in various parts of the world, including Vietnam, likened the process of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam to steps President Reagan is taking in his policy toward Central America.

The Reagan administration has "already set the groundwork" for military intervention, McGehee said. Portraying the CIA as an organization that has done no good in the world, McGehee is taking his message to students, media and special groups through a series of campus interviews. He spoke Wednesday evening at the University of Florida's William G. Carleton Auditorium.

A key development in the possible plot ending with U.S. troops in Central America is the \$100 million Contra aid package under consideration by Congress, McGehee said. The Contras are U.S.-backed forces fighting the Nicaraguan government. Although congressional opposition to aid for the Contras was strong several weeks ago, it has dwindled.

"The vote (on aid for the Contras) is critical and I think we'll see the money approved," McGehee said.

But as U.S. money goes to the Contras, so too go U.S. military advisers, and some of them will undoubtedly cross into Nicaragua, McGehee said. When a U.S. adviser is killed, the next step is to bring in U.S. troops.

"That (the death of a U.S. adviser)

will justify reprisal and the need to bring in U.S. troops," McGehee said.

In recent conflicts in Central America and in numerous other conflicts in other parts of the world over the past quarter-century, the role of the CIA was to increase conflict rather than gather intelligence information to help make foreign-policy decisions, McGehee said.

In fact, deceit is a major role of the CIA. The bodies of Nicaraguan soldiers found in Honduras, the caches of communist-made arms reportedly intercepted en route to a guerrilla hideout and a host of other bits of evidence laid before the American public are staged by the CIA, McGehee said.

People should view such events with "tongue in cheek," McGehee said. "They're absolutely staged."

McGehee said with confidence that the CIA does nothing good, but denies his views are extreme.

"I don't think I'm extreme. I can prove what I'm saying," he said.

McGehee said his stance against the CIA has, in part, relieved guilt feelings stemming from his participation in Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and other parts of the world. But he doesn't speak like a crusader who wants to inflame his audience against the CIA, nor does he fit the stereotype of a tough CIA agent.

Soft-spoken and calm, he tells his story with strict regard for the CIA secrecy agreement he made more than 30 years ago. In fact, McGehee says he has never published nor spoken secret information, nor has he been charged by the CIA with a breach of the secrecy agreement.

Instead, he carries CIA secrets in his mind, waiting for them to become public through publication or through release to congressional investigations. Then he works them into his

speeches or his books. Using information stored and updated in his computer, he has written a book called "Deadly Deceits" and is writing another.

His attitude toward the CIA, not the information he has discussed, has engendered the hatred of CIA officials, especially Director William J. Casey, he said.

For McGehee, the CIA is an organization that disrupts the working of foreign countries through intervention in politics, indoctrination of the work force and support of paramilitary forces opposing governments not in favor with the U.S. president. McGehee calls the CIA the "covert action arm of the American presidency."

Once the CIA has done its deeds, its public relations element swings into action hauling telltale bodies before the U.S. press and displaying communist weapons.

McGehee acknowledges that his stance on the CIA has angered many in his audiences but he takes their opposition calmly. "I resisted for years believing this," he said.

McGehee's speech was sponsored by Accent, Class-C and the Committee in Support of People of Latin America. He was one speaker in a series of presentations during Central America Information Week.